



# Niger's Military Intervention and Nigeria-Niger Bilateral Relations

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## Abstract

The military intervention in the Niger Republic in 2023 had a significant impact on Nigeria and Niger's bilateral relations. This article looks at the intervention's complex implications on the diplomatic, economic, and security ties between the two nations. This involved discussing the history of bilateral relations, adopting relationship rule theory as its theoretical framework, explaining the pattern of relations prior to and following the coup in 2023, outlining the technical assistance that Niger received from Nigeria, and analyzing the variables that led to Nigeria's action against Niger. There was a critical discussion and suggestions for a solution on the impact of the military coup in 2023 on the bilateral relations between the two countries. This paper uses a qualitative, systematic assessment of official statements, media accounts, and expert opinions to examine how Nigeria and Niger's dynamics of cooperation and rivalry have changed as a result of the military involvement. This study adds to a better understanding of the changing dynamics of bilateral relations in the geopolitical context of West Africa by illuminating the intricate interplay of interests and difficulties that Nigeria and Niger face.

## Keywords

Bilateral, Coup, Military intervention, Relations, Cooperation

## 1. Introduction

Based on a number of factors, including cultural similarity, historical similarity, geographic proximity, membership in the same regional organizations, and Nigerian foreign policy goals, the relationship between Nigeria and the Niger Republic has been positive since the two countries' independence. This peaceful relationship between the two nations was cut short in July 2023 when General Abdourahmane Tchiani launched a military coup that caught the attention of various international organizations that support democratic ideals in addition to Nigeria (NMFA, 2023). West Africa's and the Sahel region's security and stability are seriously jeopardized by the military coup in the Niger Republic. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has split into pro- and anti-coup blocs, which indicates that the region is becoming more and more vulnerable (Mbarek, 2023; Omotuyi et al., 2024). Currently, there is a need for the region to coordinate efforts more closely in order to combat several metastasizing risks in the neighborhood, political instability, ecological stress, banditry, and violent extremism. Nigeria's stance amid the developing crisis, which was sparked by the democratically elected president of the Niger Republic, Mohammed Bazoum, being overthrown by his own presidential guards on July 26, 2023, is of particular significance to this article. How well ECOWAS handles the consequences is largely dependent on Nigeria's stance on Niger. According to Nzomiwu (2024), pursuing the option of military intervention carries excessive danger. The military option was laudably left on the table by ECOWAS leaders during their second special conference on the issue on August 10, 2023. In order to give Niger's coup leaders a clear diplomatic escape route, Nigeria, needs to now devise win-win strategies. Given the high stakes for the region, it is commendable that a cautious approach was taken (Idiris, 2023).

ECOWAS's first response to the coup was influenced by the personal convictions of Nigerian President Bola Tinubu. His personality may also have a significant impact on whether the regional grouping decides to take military

action in Niger. There have been no fewer than five coups d'état in member states since 2020, including Mali, Guinea-Conakry, and Burkina Faso. General Muhammadu Buhari, a former military officer who was elected as a civilian leader, was in charge of Nigeria at the time the putches occurred. A boundary is being drawn in Niger by the Tinubu-led ECOWAS. Compared with the bloc's inept reactions to the past coups, this stands in stark contrast (Mbarek, 2023). A deadline of July 6th was issued by ECOWAS leaders for Niger's return to its elected government in the wake of the coup that occurred on July 26th. The ECOWAS explicitly threatened to use force, but the junta refused to budge. Aside from that, the group is also upgrading its severe financial, energy, and other measures. In addition to his personal experience, Tinubu's dread of a coup spreading, and the security challenges Nigeria faces—including the ongoing fight against Boko Haram, banditry, abduction, and other insecurities—all contribute to his position (Nzomiwu, 2024).

Significant effects of the military intervention in Niger in 2023 were felt not only by Niger itself but also by its neighbors, especially Nigeria. This essay explores the impact of the intervention on the bilateral ties between Nigeria and Niger, examining both the immediate and long-term effects.

## 2. History of Nigeria-Niger Republic Bilateral Relations

Bilateral relations between Nigeria and Niger have a long history and are marked by strong cultural, political, and economic links. With the goal of promoting stability and mutual development, these relationships have been reinforced by regional organizations like the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Sule, 2018). Both Nigeria and Niger were colonized by European powers prior to gaining their freedom, which is when the two countries' historical ties began. British colonization occurred in Nigeria, whilst French colonization occurred in Niger. The areas that currently comprise Nigeria and the Niger Republic have historical commercial routes and cultural interactions despite being under distinct colonial governments. But 1960 saw the independence of both Niger and Nigeria from France and Britain, respectively (Adekeye & Isah, 2018). In the immediate aftermath of their independence, the two nations established diplomatic ties and joined a number of regional and global organizations.

Moreover, both Nigeria and Niger have taken an active position in regional organizations like the Niger Basin Authority and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). From trade and infrastructure development to security and environmental management, these organizations have offered forums for collaboration on a variety of topics (Ayoola, 2016). Since their independence, both nations have worked together on security issues, especially when it comes to combating transnational threats like organized crime, terrorism, and smuggling. According to Abdullahi (2018), in order to address these issues, coordinated military actions and intelligence-sharing protocols have been put in place. Moreover, commercial linkages spanning a number of industries, including manufacturing, energy, and agriculture, have enhanced Nigeria's economic proximity to Niger. According to Adetayo (2023) both nations have looked into joint ventures and infrastructure projects as potential avenues for economic cooperation. Nigeria-Niger relations have had difficulties and sporadic tensions despite their mutual collaboration in many areas. These tensions have occasionally resulted in diplomatic negotiations and strains in their relationship due to disagreements over border concerns, resource management, and trade rules (Ayoola, 2016). Additionally, maintaining bilateral relations and settling conflicts between Nigeria and Niger have required diplomatic interaction. To address problems and improve cooperation between the two nations, strategies like high-level visits, bilateral commissions, and diplomatic discussions have been employed (Oluwole & Olawuyi, 2015). Overall, the history of bilateral relations between Nigeria and the Niger Republic is characterized by a complex interplay of common interests, cooperative efforts, and sporadic difficulties that are influenced by socioeconomic, geographic, and historical variables.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

Examining the implicit and explicit rules guiding interactions in human relationships, relationship rule theory was created within the discipline of interpersonal communication and is adopted in this article. It offers a paradigm for comprehending how people navigate, uphold, and regulate their interpersonal connections. Relational dynamics and communication theories form the larger framework within which the theory is based. Early research on the subject by academics such as Paul Watzlawick and his colleagues at the Mental Research Institute created the foundation for the idea by looking at the ways in which individuals communicate in relationships. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory of 1987 was published in Watzlawick, P., Bavelas, J. B., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). It was throughout the 1980s and 1990s that researchers such as Susan Sprecher and Sandra Metts developed relationship rule theory more clearly. According to Sprinkler and Metts (1999), their research aimed to uncover the particular principles that individuals believed to be necessary for preserving various kinds of relationships, including friendships, romantic relationships, and family bonds. Research on the differences in relationship rules between cultures and circumstances has been conducted more recently. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), this research has shown that whereas certain rules—like honesty and trust—appears to be universally respected, others can be quite context-specific and shaped by cultural norms and values. Knowing the ground principles of a relationship can assist individuals and mediators deal with infractions, leading to more successful interpersonal conflict resolution.

A helpful framework for analyzing and comprehending bilateral ties between nations, such as those between Nigeria and Niger, is provided by this theory. According to this idea, state behavior and interactions can be viewed as being guided by either explicit or implicit "rules" in international relations. Treaties and agreements can formalize these

laws, or customs and norms can be used to understand them informally. Significant historical and cultural ties exist between Nigeria and Niger. Pre-colonial governments and empires included both nations, and they share ethnic groupings like the Hausa and Kanuri. Mutual understanding is based on these common cultural and historical origins, which also shape the norms of conduct between the two countries (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012). There are multiple official agreements that support Nigeria's and Niger's bilateral relations. These consist of agreements on trade, border control norms, and security. One example of a framework for collaboration in several industries is the 1983 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, as well as later accords. Interdependence is a defining feature of Nigeria's economic relationship with Niger. Nigeria is a major supplier of goods and services to Niger, and its larger economy contributes significantly to Niger's commerce with the country. However, Niger offers vital resources that Nigeria's energy sector needs, such as uranium. According to Ebiziem (2013), trade agreements and joint economic commissions are frequently used to formalize the regulations governing this economic interdependence. The challenges posed by insurgent groups such as Boko Haram underscore the need of security cooperation in the relationship between Nigeria and Niger. To combat terrorism, the two nations have shared intelligence and participated in combined military actions. Formal security agreements and the concept of mutual security serve as the foundation for these coordinated efforts.

Nigeria and Niger are constituents of both regional and international institutions, including the United Nations (UN) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). Their mutual relationships are shaped by the rules and conventions that these affiliations impose. According to Omeje (2006), border policies and economic cooperation are influenced by the ECOWAS protocols for the free movement of people and goods. According to the theory, Nigeria and Niger, along with other neighboring nations, collaborate under the Lake Chad Basin Commission to manage water resources and handle environmental concerns. This is an example of how formal and informal regulations influence interactions between the two countries. This commission's agreements and guidelines serve as a roadmap for their cooperative efforts in this crucial field. Formal agreements control security cooperation, as demonstrated by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which is composed of both Nigeria and Niger. To enable successful coordinated military action against insurgent threats, the MNJTF's operational procedures and rules of engagement are created (Tukur, 2016). Regulations for economic exchanges are set forth in bilateral trade agreements, like the Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation. Enhancing economic links and mutual benefits are the goals of these agreements, which cover topics including tariffs, infrastructure development, and customs processes.

#### 4. Research Method

This paper utilizes qualitative method that was sourced through the review and analysis of documents and reports that discussed issues pertaining to military interventions in Africa and Niger in particular as well as Nigeria-Niger relations after the recent military intervention in Niger. Data of empirical studies indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Scimago were utilized in this article. These data were complemented with information and reports from national dailies (newspapers, government magazines, official documents), African Union reports, and ECOWAS reports as well as recognized international bodies on military intervention in Niger and its effects on Nigeria-Niger relations. Data were content-analyzed descriptively using themes that align with objectives of the article.

#### 5. Pattern of Nigeria-Niger Republic Bilateral Relation Before and after 2023 Niger's Military Intervention

Nigeria and the Niger Republic established bilateral ties before to the military intervention in 2023, which were marked by collaboration in a number of areas, including trade, security, and infrastructure development. The foundation of their diplomatic relations was established by the fact that both nations are adjacent and have a long history of social, cultural, and economic links. Nigeria was one of Niger Republic's main commercial partners, and the two countries had substantial trade links. The main products traded in this commerce were manufactured commodities, petroleum products, and agricultural products (Mbarek, 2023; Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012). Apart from that, both nations worked together on energy and transportation networks as well as other infrastructure projects to boost connectivity and encourage regional economic development (Adetayo, 2023). Regarding security cooperation, Nigeria and Niger Republic worked closely together to address shared security challenges, especially those pertaining to terrorism, insurgency, and cross-border crime (Adewale, 2019). The cooperative efforts included intelligence sharing, coordinated border patrols, and joint military operations targeted at fighting extremist groups like Boko Haram and other criminal elements operating in the region. However, after the military intervention in Niger Republic in 2023—the details of which will depend on the developments that transpired in both countries after the intervention—military interventions frequently introduce uncertainty and undermine democratic ideology upheld by the region—the dynamics of Nigeria-Niger Republic bilateral relations changed.

Following the intervention, there was a significant shift in the way the two nations interacted as a result of the Niger military coup plotter's refusal to abide by the norms and the organization's current philosophy being violated. Furthermore, by interfering with already-established procedures for collaboration, the incursion has provoked threats of joint military action against Niger, border closures, and international organization sanctions. (Amotola, 2014). Stronger diplomatic ties are facilitated by the shared ethnic groupings, linguistic commonalities, and cultural contacts. From the time of their independence until 2023, the two countries' relationships had followed these patterns. However, Nigeria,

being a prominent member of many of these international organizations, denounced Niger's military intervention, which shattered their previously established dynamic (Ayoola, 2016). Blocking all relationships and aid that Nigeria was providing to the country was done as a demonstration that the country opposed any administration that undermined democratic philosophy. Ministry of Defense Permanent Secretary Dr. Ibrahim Abubakar Kana stated that:

*Asserting that Nigeria and the Republic of Niger have a long-standing relationship founded on a shared border, cultural heritage, and shared history, Nigeria will continue to fortify its defense bilateral ties with that country. Because both nations uphold the spirit of good government, their relationship has remained familial over time. Furthermore, he mentioned that on October 18, 2012, Nigeria and Niger signed an agreement on Defense Cooperation. The speaker observed that, out of all Nigeria's borders with other neighbors, the one with Niger has been comparatively the calmest and least eventful. Each nation has built its diplomatic ties on the principle of non-interference in the other's domestic affairs, and there have been no significant border confrontations between them. (The Guardian, 2023)*

There are security issues that both nations deal with, such as terrorism and insurgency. A fundamental aspect of their bilateral relations is cooperation in the war against extremist organizations like Boko Haram. They must cooperate in security in order to share intelligence and carry out joint military operations and border security measures (Aljazeera, 2023). Enhancing communication between Nigeria and Niger and fostering regional integration are the goals of infrastructure projects, such as the construction of roads and rail networks. The Trans-Saharan Highway and the projected Lagos-Niamey Railway project are examples of initiatives that demonstrate their dedication to economic integration and infrastructural development (Oluwole & Olawuyi, 2015).

## **6. Technical Aids Enjoyed by Niger Republic from Nigeria since Independence**

Since Niger Republic's independence, Nigeria has given it a variety of technical help, demonstrating the two nations' close bilateral ties. Among them are a few that are:

### **6.1 Infrastructure Development**

Road building, bridge building, and telecommunications network construction are among the infrastructural projects in which Nigeria has helped the Niger Republic. These initiatives seek to promote economic growth and increase connectivity. Road building and maintenance are among the infrastructure projects in Niger to which Nigeria has contributed. The ongoing building of the Kano-Daura-Katsina-Jibiya-Maradi railway line, which will connect Nigeria to the Niger Republic and improve commercial and transportation ties between the two nations, is one noteworthy project (Premium Times, March 9, 2021).

### **6.2 Building Capacity**

Nigeria has helped the Niger Republic implement capacity-building projects, including training courses for professionals, students, and government employees. Niger's institutional capability and human resources are strengthened by these initiatives.

### **6.3 Healthcare Support**

Nigeria has donated medical supplies, equipment, and vaccinations to the Niger Republic in order to help with their healthcare needs. By tackling public health issues, this support helps to improve access to healthcare. By supplying medical supplies, equipment, and knowledge, Nigeria has helped Niger with its healthcare needs. For instance, in an effort to stop the COVID-19 epidemic from spreading, Nigeria gave Niger test kits, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other crucial medical supplies (The Guardian, July 14, 2020).

### **6.4 Educational Support**

Nigeria and Niger Republic have worked together on educational projects, such as providing scholarships for Nigerien students to attend Nigerian colleges. By working together, the two nations' people-to-people relations and educational possibilities are strengthened. Scholarships and training opportunities for Nigerien professionals and students have been extended by Nigeria. Scholarships for Nigerien students to attend universities in Nigeria and training courses in a range of subjects, including public administration, healthcare, and agriculture, are included in this. (Pulse Nigeria, June 3, 2020) Nigeria provides scholarships to one hundred Nigerien students.

### **6.5 Agricultural Development**

In the areas of irrigation, agricultural cultivation, and animal management, Nigeria and the Niger Republic have exchanged knowledge and technology. The aims of these efforts are to improve Niger's agricultural output and food security.

### **6.6 Security Support**

Nigeria has given Niger Republic security support in the form of cooperative military drills, intelligence sharing, and assistance in battling transnational threats including organized crime and terrorism. The security and stability of the



region are strengthened by this partnership. In order to combat smuggling, human trafficking, and other transnational crimes, Nigeria has helped Niger strengthen border security. Joint patrols, intelligence sharing, and border security forces' capacity building are also part of this assistance (Vanguard, April 12, 2019).

### 6.7 Energy Cooperation

Nigeria has provided support to Niger in the area of energy cooperation, specifically with regards to the provision of electricity. In order to help Niger, expand its energy infrastructure and give its people better access to electricity, Nigeria has given technical aid and knowledge (The Nation, November 20, 2018).

## 7. Factors that Influenced Nigeria's Actions against Niger Republic's Military Intervention

Several factors influence Nigeria's actions towards Niger Republic:

1. From a political standpoint, Tinubu abhors the military in politics. When Tinubu was a young politician in 1993, former Nigerian military leader Abacha sent him into exile. More recently, Tinubu took issue with the way military putschists in Guinea-Conakry deposed and imprisoned President Alpha Conde, who was likely his closest friend in West Africa.
2. Tinubu fears for his personal standing. Some officers abroad, particularly Nigerian soldiers who are sympathetic to his own opponents, may become more confident due to military authority in the Niger Republic.
3. Because he is a stickler for law and order, he probably knows from briefings that his administration won't stabilize Nigeria if efforts to combat robbers, insurgents, and other Nigerian security-related issues don't advance.

A breakdown of state authority in Niamey akin to that in Mali is a concern posed by the Niger putsch. According to Nzomiwu (2024), this is thought to make Tinubu's plan for reestablishing inclusive security in Nigeria more difficult. Consequently, he was forced to confront Niger's coup directly. The ability to withstand betrayals surfaced (Idris, 2023). Fourth, one of the things that has influenced Tinubu's stance against the Niger Republic is the leadership position that Nigeria has played in sub-regional organizations, particularly in ECOWAS since the organization's founding. Tinubu would rather not oppose the ECOWAS decision to intervene militarily in Niger now that he is the organization's chairman. In retaliation, Nigeria severed its connection to Niger's electrical supply, closed the shared border, and started the internal procedure necessary to stage a military intervention in Niger that would need to be approved by the African National Congress. Nigeria's Senate urged the administration to consider political and diplomatic alternatives before resorting to military force, but the government appears prepared to use force to overthrow the coup. Bello (2023) notes that opposition to the use of force in Nigeria is becoming more and more vocal every minute. Security professionals, traditional and religious leaders, and members of the general public are among them.

The proposed military involvement by ECOWAS in Niger is in conflict with the foreign policy goals and objectives of Nigeria, as stipulated by the country's constitution. The protection and advancement of national interest is Nigeria's primary foreign policy goal, as stated in the 1999 Constitution. The definition of national interest is a contentious concept that is not widely agreed upon, but in Nigeria, it is particularly vague. This may have made Ali Ndume, argues that:

*I don't believe it is in the national interest for a nation to go to war when it is dealing with difficult domestic issues, consensus or not. A nation's external and internal environmental circumstances should influence its foreign policy. Nigeria recently concluded a nationwide election campaign that sharply divided the nation along racial and even religious lines. At the Election Petition Court, challenges to the government's legitimacy are still pending. In addition, the new government's tough economic policies—such as the withdrawal of fuel subsidies and the floating of the Naira—are causing immense suffering for Nigerians. The withdrawal of gasoline subsidies caused the price of fuel to surge from N195 to N617 in just two months under the Tinubu administration (Premium Times March 13, 2024).*

The price of fuel has increased dramatically, which has caused a sharp rise in the price of food and other commodities as well as transportation costs. Nigeria's foreign debt, excluding the proposed \$800 million loan from the World Bank for subsidized palliatives, is estimated by the Debt Management Office to be approximately \$41.69 billion. According to Nzomiwu (2024) insecurity has continued to worsen.

The second foreign policy goal of Nigeria, which is to assist and encourage African unity and integration, is similarly at odds with military intervention in Niger. If Niger is used as the front in another superpower proxy war, Africa might fall apart. International disdain and discrimination in all its forms will be fostered by military intervention in Niger. Thus, diplomacy ought to be used to end Niger's political issue. The President has ordered that the following sanctions against the Republic of Niger be immediately rescinded, although rejecting a military response to the coup in Niger:

- The Nigerian-Nigeria air and land borders are closed, and all commercial aircraft to and from the Niger Republic are subject to an ECOWAS no-fly zone.
- All business and financial exchanges between Nigeria and Niger shall be suspended. Additionally, all service exchanges, including those involving the provision of power and utility services to the Niger Republic, shall be frozen.

- The assets of the Republic of Niger, state companies, and parastatals in commercial banks as well as the Republic of Niger's assets in ECOWAS Central Banks are frozen.
- Niger's denial of any financial aid and termination of any dealings with financial organizations, especially EBID and BOAD.
- Prohibitions against government employees and their families traveling (Ngelale, 2024).

## 8. The Effect of the 2023 Coup on Nigeria-Niger Bilateral Relation

In 2023, due to several considerations such as historical, cultural, economic, and political factors, Nigeria has not experienced any negative impacts from Niger's coup on bilateral or multilateral relations at the sub-regional level, where Nigeria is one of the major players in the matter. After talking about the main reasons behind Nigeria's actions against the military leader of Niger, this section will discuss how the coup affected bilateral relations between Nigeria and Niger. Nigeria and Niger have worked together in the energy sector, especially when building pipelines to transport petroleum products. Delays in these collaborative projects caused by the military intervention have affected the two nations' energy cooperation.

The Boko Haram insurgency, herder-farmer violence, and banditry have caused widespread instability in Nigeria's North East and North West, making daily living already challenging. The sanctions have only made the situation worse. When their husbands were slain by jihadists or bandits, women were left to care for their families alone. If these women's livelihoods were dependent on cross-border trading, this could lead to increased poverty and malnourishment of children. The border closure also puts female traders at risk of being forced onto illicit trade routes, where they could be attacked by bandits and exploited by smugglers (Ibrahim, 2023). Collaborating the above assertion, a gender activist, Sarah Dantsoho Tama observed that:

*Downturns in the economy may increase the vulnerability of women and girls in border communities to human trafficking and gender-based violence. Desperate traders along illegal smuggling routes become targets for armed groups, increasing the risk as more women turn to food begging or other coping mechanisms (ICG, 2023).*

Even significant infrastructure projects aimed at promoting human security and regional trade are derailed by the sanctions and the ensuing hostilities between Nigeria and Niger. In order to construct a 284-kilometer railway from Kano to Maradi, the second-largest city in Niger, the Nigerian government and Portugal's Mota-Engil Group inked a \$2 billion deal in 2021. Daily cross-border transportation of thousands of persons and goods is possible with the railway. Credit Suisse Group, Africa Finance, and the state-owned German development bank KfW would provide the funding, but after the coup, the EU stopped providing funding to Niger (Adetayo, 2023). All other sources of funding were contracted out. In September, Nigeria's new transport minister, Ahmed Alkali, said that:

*From 2021 onwards, the project had advanced well, and there was hope that rail line construction would begin shortly. By not making any headway on the 24 km stretch from the border to Maradi, at least not until the sanctions are reversed, the project's 2025 completion target may remain elusive (BBC News, 2023).*

The enormous Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline project in Nigeria, which was first envisioned in the 1970s, is also at risk of being delayed or worse. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Algeria, Nigeria, and Niger decided to resurrect the \$13 billion project as demand for natural gas increased globally. The 4,100 km pipeline is intended to travel from Nigeria via Niger and end at the coast of Algeria. From there, it might provide up to 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year to Europe. Tinubu promised to finish the pipeline and increase Nigeria's gas exports and earnings during his presidential campaign. Construction of the pipeline was threatened even before the military took control of Niamey by bandits in northwest Nigeria and terrorists in Niger. The project is now much more doubtful due to the coup and the strict sanctions imposed by the ECOWAS, making the future of relations between Nigeria and Niger uncertain—at least while the Niamey junta is in charge (ICG, 2023; Adetayo, 2023).

The current hostilities could hinder counterterrorism efforts and impede regional stabilization efforts. Together, the four governments that make up the Lake Chad basin—Niger, Nigeria, and Islamic State West Africa Province—are combining forces to combat Boko Haram and other militant organizations. Since 2015, the two nations have collaborated with Cameroon and Chad on counter-insurgency operations under the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). During the force's activities, soldiers from one nation have occasionally crossed into another. Major General Edward Buba, the director of defense media operations for Nigeria, stated that:

*The agreement seems risky now. Nigerian media allegations that the junta had left the MNJTF were openly refuted by military spokesman in both Niger and Nigeria. Nevertheless, it is evident that the degree of cooperation has not returned to what it was before the coup and the sanctions. According to the Sun (August 25, 2023), for example, there has been less than ideal contact between the MNJTF headquarters and the Nigerian units. This is clearly because of the political setting.*

Despite having nominated replacements, Niger has not replaced the troops it rotated out of MNJTF headquarters in N'Djamena in September, which has resulted in a manpower shortage at the headquarters. The necessity to focus military

resources on protecting Niamey from the ECOWAS's imminent military intervention rather than any plans to leave the MNJTF was what caused the delay. In addition to the MNJTF, Niger has significant security implications for Nigeria. The two nations have frequently worked together to combat cross-border crimes and illicit economic activity, such as the trafficking of persons, weapons, and drugs. Niger's political unrest has impeded efforts at bilateral security and made young men in both nations more susceptible to recruitment should jihadists or criminal gangs find themselves with less restrictions (Ogbuli, 2023).

Kola Sulaimon (2024) said, "While expressing the suffering and pain experienced by traders and communities in both countries during the sanction imposed on Republic of Niger," He said that:

*As a result of ECOWAS sanctions against Niger, traders and people on both sides of the country's border suffered. With the return of trade, the local economy is expected to grow even more thanks to a recently constructed railway financed by China. A trader reaches the closed Niger-Nigeria border at Jibia, only to find it to be a pen for business: traders operating between Niger and Nigeria depend on the Jibiya-Maradi border post as a crucial crossing point.*

Recognizing the different sanctions and actions the Nigerian government has taken to guarantee the restoration of Bazoum's government, Mohammed Babangida declared that:

*The goal of the sanctions was to push Bazoum back into office and bring back constitutional order to Niger. The measures included border closures, power outages, and threats of using "force" against the military junta. The actions were ineffective, and the border closure caused hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of missed trade, devastating local populations on both sides of the border. The Jibiya-Maradi border crossing is where trucks are parked. Trucks had to pull up at the Nigerian border in August 2023 since official trade between the two countries had ended (Premium Times March 13, 2024).*

Though Nigeria was forced to comply with ECOWAS sanctions, Niamey has seen Nigeria's decision to cease delivering electricity as an especially aggressive action. The action, according to Ahmed Magaji (2024), breaches resource sharing agreements that date back decades. Magaji has held positions as ambassador to São Tomé and Príncipe and deputy head of mission in Saudi Arabia. Others point out that Niger has a history of not paying for electricity, even in cases when it wasn't needed, and that building the Kandadji multipurpose dam and hydroelectric power plant broke its agreement with Nigeria to share the Niger River. Whatever the reason, Niamey's relationship with its more powerful southern neighbor has been strained as a result of the power outages, which could have an impact on bilateral relations. "Our long-standing strategic advantage over Niger is eroding (Tukur, 2024). Supporting above opinion, Hussain (2023) strictly observed that:

*In border settlements, residents were shut off from all conventional trade and socioeconomic activity prior to the ECOWAS lifting of the sanctions. Nigeria is one of Niamey's main economic partners, and Nigeria borders five of Niger's eight regions: Zinder, Tahoua, Maradi, Dosso, and Diffa. Niger has long been receiving supplies from Nigeria, including tobacco, cement, and energy. The border stretches for around 1,600 kilometers (994 miles). Goats and cattle, which are agricultural goods, flowed in the opposite way. "Our hardships are over whenever we continue to have peace cordial understanding between Nigeria and Niger". further stated that, according to data from the International Trade Centre (ITC), cross-border trade between Niger and Nigeria was valued at about \$226 million (\$209 million) in 2022.*

Abdulkadir stated that Nigeria's border closure was a strategic error, refuting the ECOWAS and Nigerian government's desire to punish the Niger Republic. He states that:

*ECOWAS leaders should have been better students of history. Countries like Cuba, Iran, Iraq and others had suffered from the effects of sanctions, but the leaders survived. There are some strategic relations that exist between Niger and Nigeria, for instance, the utilization of the water of River Niger. Added that, the Nigeriens had to be pacified long ago not to dam the river, otherwise they would have been enjoying their own power, without relying on Nigeria (The Sun, August 25, 2023).*

Corroborating above view, one of Business man, Bintou Adamou expressed that:

*Traders had no choice except to cross the border illegally prior to its reopening. Notwithstanding the border restriction, I did not have a break for business, but I suffered greatly and was not pleased with the ECOWAS's decision. The expense of living and other challenges continues to plague those who trade between Nigeria and Niger (The Guardian, March 14, 2024)*

In contrast, Abdulkadir (2024) noted that during the examination of the detrimental impact on the long-standing cultural and historical links between the two countries, and that:



*The impact of the sanctions on Nigeria-Niger relations has been broader in terms of society. Individuals who previously identified as half-Nigerians or half-Nigeriens started to view themselves as full Nigeriens as a result of our relationship being so negatively impacted by our blind adoption of those stifling measures (Guardian, March 14, 2024)*

The long-standing political ties between Nigeria and Niger are being harmed by the ECOWAS sanctions. When it comes to combatting extremists near Lake Chad, Niger has been the most reliable security partner among Nigeria's neighbors. Many Nigerians believe that the federal government must reconcile its adherence to democratic principles under ECOWAS with the practicalities of handling security and humanitarian issues, which necessitate continuing collaboration and partnership with Niger even in the face of military control. For a number of reasons, they draw attention to how the two nations' developing hostility may eventually affect their ability to work together on a bilateral basis (Oloruntoba, 2023). Professor Tukur Abdulkadir, an international relations expert from Kaduna State University in northern Nigeria, supported the aforementioned opinion by stating that:

*There were cries everywhere as soon as the penalties were imposed because the relationship had lasted for generations. Local farmers were severely harmed. However, the border region between Jibiya and Maradi has returned to some semblance of normalcy in recent weeks. People doing business can travel freely between the neighboring countries. As of March 13, 2024, Premium Times.*

The military involvement generated instability in trade and commerce, which negatively impacted the livelihoods of traders and enterprises on both sides of the border by disrupting cross-border trade and commerce between Nigeria and Niger. The tight business ties that Northerners have with Niger have been weakened by the sanctions, among other reasons. For field labor, a number of border settlements primarily employ laborers from Niger. Restaurants and retail establishments that depend on patrons from Niger are struggling. Official border traffic has stopped as automobiles are prevented from entering the neighboring country by Nigerian officials. In many areas of northern Nigeria, the economy is being driven underground by the blocked border. Expectedly, smuggling—a persistent issue at the border and in the region—is becoming more common (Usman, 2023). In particular, in the area near Illela (Sokoto state), the Jibiya to Daura/Kongolam axis (Katsina state), and in the Zurmi local government area (Zamfara state), people are shipping items across the border on motorbikes, tricycles, or donkeys. Some of them are even navigating dangerous terrain where armed gangs are active. Many smugglers collaborate with crooked immigration and customs officials who are asking for bribes that are getting bigger and bigger. Security officers who attempted to intercept smugglers in the Dankama area of Katsina state, for instance, have reportedly been attacked by them (Adetayo, 2023). When the border reopens, it might be challenging to break apart some of these smuggling networks and the unlawful businesses they are creating. According to Ajuri Ngelale,

*Along with the immediate withdrawal of additional sanctions against the nation, President Tinubu "directed the opening of Nigeria's land and air borders with the Republic of Niger."The ECOWAS Central Bank's asset freeze on Niger will likewise be lifted in accordance with the presidential directive. (Mar. 13, 2024, Premium Times).*

Buttressing above view, Shehu Salmanuini stated that:

*President Bola Tinubu has ordered the immediate withdrawal of additional sanctions against the Republic of Niger as well as the opening of Nigeria's air and land borders with that nation. This directive complies with the decisions made in Abuja on February 24, 2024, during the emergency summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. The leaders of ECOWAS have decided to remove economic sanctions imposed on Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Republic of Niger (Premium Times, April 5, 2024).*

While illustrating the circumstances surrounding border communities following the removal of sanctions, Rafi'a Hussain (2024) noted that:

*I am grateful to God for this progress and am thrilled that the border has been reopened," said the businesswoman. We are traveling freely, amicably, and without interference from the on-duty police or anyone else. It's not as hard as I had imagined for us to cross."*

The influence on trading patterns is particularly significant when one considers how the sanctions on Niger are harming the economies of the northern states of Nigeria. Ordinarily, the area between Katsina and Kano in northern Nigeria and Maradi, the second-largest city in Niger, is a thriving commercial corridor. The UN international trade database states that in 2021, Nigeria shipped \$180 million worth of goods and services, including cement, tobacco, and energy, to Niger. Fruits, refined petroleum, and livestock-derived items accounted up the majority of Niger's \$56.8 million in exports to Nigeria that year. Since these numbers only include transactions that were formally recorded, it is clear that when informal cross-border trade is taken into account, real trade volumes are significantly higher (UNSC, 2023; Ogbuli, 2023)



## 9. Conclusion

The military intervention in Niger in 2023 affected bilateral relations between Nigeria and Niger in both short and long terms. Although the immediate impact caused economic disruption and sparked security worries, the long-term effects hinge on both nations' capacity to work together to address common issues and advance regional stability. In order to navigate the intricacies of the post-intervention scenario and fortify the relationship between Nigeria and Niger, ongoing diplomatic engagement and cooperation are needed.

## 10. Recommendations

Notwithstanding the acts of its neighboring countries, the Nigerian government should not be swayed by any regional organization and instead should be directed by its foreign policy goals. In order to address any lingering concerns or differences, Nigeria should always welcome and give priority to diplomatic engagement and dialogue. Frequent gatherings, diplomatic visits, and dialogue channels can work to overcome bilateral difficulties. Mediation, arbitration, or third-party facilitation are examples of conflict resolution techniques that the two nations could use in order to handle disagreements and stop hostilities from getting worse. These methods can help resolve difficult problems amicably.

Understanding and goodwill between the peoples of Nigeria and the Niger Republic can be fostered through promoting people-to-people exchange through cultural, educational, and social initiatives. Cultural festivals, collaborative community projects, and student exchanges are a few examples of initiatives that can foster goodwill and cross-cultural barriers. Both nations may strengthen regional integration efforts and advance shared interests by utilizing regional institutions like the African Union and the ECOWAS. Through collaboration within the framework of regional organizations, Nigeria and the Niger Republic may fortify their relationship and advance the stability and advancement of West Africa

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## Declaration of Conflict

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